

Refugees in Canada: Myths and Facts

MYTH: Real refugees are those who wait in refugee camps overseas. Those who make a claim in Canada jump the line and are not as deserving.

FACT: Refugees are people who have been forced from their homes by human rights abuses. All refugees have a right to protection, wherever they are. Canada also has legal obligations towards refugees in Canada under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention against Torture. The Supreme Court of Canada has also confirmed that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights of asylum-seekers to fundamental justice.

MYTH: Refugee claimants pose threats to Canada's security.

FACT: Refugee claimants are not threats to security – they are seeking security and protection from threats to their own lives. Refugee claimants all go through a front-end security screening. Through this process, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) checks all refugee claimants on arrival in Canada. Since the screening was put in place in 2001, the number of claimants found to represent any kind of security concern has been statistically insignificant.

MYTH: Refugees are a drain on our economy.

FACT: Only a handful of the world's refugees (about .007% in 2008) receive assistance from the Canadian government usually for a very limited amount of time (one year). All refugees who resettle to Canada (except for Syrian refugees) are expected to pay back the travel costs associated with their resettlement. Studies show that refugees and immigrants also contribute positively to the Canadian economy. Many refugees start small businesses that employ both themselves and native Canadians. In addition, immigration helps to offset the effects of our declining birth rate and aging population.

MYTH: Refugees want to abuse the system and get rich.

FACT: Refugees do not come to Canada to abuse the system or get rich. It is important to remember the cause for which they resettle to Canada. Unlike economic migrants, refugees have arrived in Canada in search of protection. The wars and conflicts that caused people to flee their countries in the first place did not discriminate between the rich or poor, and many of them led successful lives before being forced to leave everything behind in search of safety. Source: Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International and Citizenship and Immigration Canada

MYTH: Government-assisted refugees receive more money for food than Canadians on welfare.

FACT:

- **Refugee claimants** and refugees recognized by the Immigration and Refugee Board receive no special income assistance. They may, depending on provincial regulations, be entitled, like other residents, to social assistance.

PEEL

STRATEGY GROUP

Together.

- **Privately sponsored refugees** are not entitled to any government income assistance (federal or the provincial government) during the period of their sponsorship (usually for one year after arrival). Their income support must be provided by their sponsors.
- **Government assisted refugees** have access to financial assistance from the federal government through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). This financial assistance is generally for one year maximum and is received only if they do not have their own financial resources or income. The exact rate depends on the size of the family and is tied to social assistance rates.

In Ontario in July 2013, for example, a single person receives \$781 per month. In addition, government-assisted refugees are entitled to a one-time set up allowance, to cover such things as clothes, basic household effects and staples, and telephone installation. For a single person there is a maximum one-time allowance of \$905, plus a \$564 loan for house rental and telephone line deposits.

MYTH: Canada is finally opening its doors to refugees after years of being closed to the idea.

FACT: Canada has been welcome refugees for decades now. Each year, Canada provides asylum to more than 10,000 persecuted persons and welcomes another 12,000 refugees from abroad.

As a member of the international community, Canada helps find solutions to prolonged and emerging refugee situations and helps emerging democracies try to solve many of the problems that create refugee populations. To do this, Canada works closely with the UNHCR.

MYTH: Canada does more than its share to assist refugees and asylum-seekers when compared to other countries.

FACT: Only a small minority of refugees and asylum-seekers make claims in the world's richest countries, including Canada. In 2013, developing countries hosted 86 percent of the world's refugees (which is an increase of 16 percent from 10 years ago). The least developed countries were providing asylum to 2.8 million refugees by the end of 2013.

According to UNHCR figures, more than 5.4 million refugees reside in countries where the GDP per capital is below USD 5000. Top Host countries in 2013: Pakistan (1.6

million); Iran (857,400); Lebanon (856,500); Jordan (641,900); Turkey (609,900). Other host countries include Kenya, Chad, Ethiopia, China. According to the CIC Immigration Levels Plan for 2015, Canada will accept:

- GARs: 6500 (high) – 5800 (low)
- Privately Sponsored Refugees: 6500 (high) – 4500 (low)

According to the UNHCR, the top 5 major source countries of refugees at the end of 2013 were:

- Afghanistan (2,556,600)
- Syria (2,468,400)
- Somalia (1,121,700)
- Sudan (649,300)
- Congo (499,500)